

# Yad Vashem Jerusalem

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**WORLD  
HOLOCAUST  
FORUM 2020**

Remembering the Holocaust  
Fighting Antisemitism



**“Remembering the Holocaust,  
Fighting Antisemitism”**

**The Fifth World Holocaust Forum at Yad Vashem (pp. 2-7)**

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■ **On the cover:** The Fifth World Holocaust Forum at Yad Vashem, 23 January 2020

# “Rememb



■ At the invitation of the President of the State of Israel, some 50 members of royalty, presidents, prime ministers and parliamentary leaders from Europe, North America and Australia attended the Fifth World Holocaust Forum, entitled “Remembering the Holocaust, Fighting Antisemitism,” on 23 January 2020.

Organized by the World Holocaust Forum Foundation in cooperation with Yad Vashem, the Forum took place in a specially erected marquis in Yad Vashem’s Warsaw Ghetto Square (the site of the annual Opening State Ceremony for Holocaust Remembrance Day). The Forum was held in advance of the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, and the UN-sanctioned International Holocaust Remembrance Day on 27 January.

Here are some images and highlights from this unprecedented event at Yad Vashem:

# ering the Holocaust, Fighting Antisemitism”

The Fifth World Holocaust Forum at Yad Vashem



■ Interspersed throughout the proceedings were musical interludes performed by an international orchestra, conducted by world-renowned conductor Vladimir Spivakov and accompanied by an international choir.



■ The ceremony concluded with a moment of silence as the delegates stood together in front of Nathan Rapaport's "Warsaw Ghetto Uprising" monument.

■ The ten speakers at the event represented the State of Israel, the Fifth World Holocaust Forum hosts, and the four Allied countries who liberated Europe from Nazi tyranny. Due to his country's special obligation in Holocaust remembrance and the fight against contemporary antisemitism, German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier also addressed the audience. "I stand here laden with the heavy, historical burden of guilt," he acknowledged. "I wish I could say that our remembrance has made us immune to evil."

"Today we remember what happens when the powerless cry for help and the powerful refuse to answer," said US Vice President Michael R. Pence. President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin remarked that the Forum participants had come together "to honor the victims of the Holocaust by a shared responsibility – our duty to the past and the future." "We must never cease to be appalled, nor moved by the testimony of those who lived through [the Shoah]," stated HRH Prince Charles, Prince of Wales. "Their experience must always educate, guide and warn us." French President Emmanuel Macron declared: "In our history, antisemitism always preceded the weakening of democracy."

Israel's President Reuven "Ruvi" Rivlin spoke about "The Age of Responsibility" being an ongoing challenge. Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu claimed that "confronting antisemitism in all its forms protects all societies." World Holocaust Forum Foundation President Dr. Moshe Kantor hoped for a united effort to "plant the seeds of trust and belief," while Holocaust survivor and Chairman of the Yad Vashem Council Rabbi Israel Meir Lau called the event "a bridge to the survival of mankind."



## Yad Vashem Chairman's Address



■ *Yad Vashem Chairman Avner Shalev*

■ ***“I am writing this letter before my death, although I don't know the exact day my relatives and I will be killed just because we are Jews... How I yearn to live and reach some good in life. But everything is lost... Farewell.”***

These were the last words of Fanya Barbakow before she was murdered in the Druja ghetto in 1942.

The Holocaust was the most deadly manifestation of antisemitism. It was the outcome of an extreme racist ideology, adopted by a modern state, to blame one group for all collective ills.

Nazi antisemitism was used to legitimize unprecedented cruelty: the systematic murder of millions of innocent people. Even today, the Holocaust seems almost impossible to grasp. But we must do just that, because while the Nazi plan was aimed against the Jews, antisemitic atrocities never end with the Jews.

The Holocaust was a calamity for the Jewish people and a catastrophe for all people. The Shoah proved that modernity does not ensure

morality. Values do not necessarily progress along with technology.

Seventy-five years after liberation, Holocaust remembrance is more relevant than ever. It serves as a lighthouse, warning us of the danger of extreme racist ideologies.

Yad Vashem – the World Holocaust Remembrance Center, is the gatekeeper of Holocaust memory. It is here in Jerusalem that the voices and legacy of the Shoah victims and survivors are gathered, preserved and made accessible for all humanity.

### “Memory must be translated into action”

Now, memory must be translated into action. Antisemitism, and all other forms of racism, will never be diminished through silence! Tackling antisemitism today requires a range of policies and tools – locally, nationally and internationally. International forums, such as ours here today, fortify a united front against any expressions of racism, anywhere.

Our mutual duty is to educate the upcoming generation, to ensure that everyone understands what constitutes antisemitism, and remembers where it had led us in the past. As an educator, I realized early on that Yad Vashem must create

the International School for Holocaust Studies. Here, professionals from around the world learn accurate facts about the Holocaust, and how to communicate its meanings to their communities, peers and students.

Our comprehensive research, numerous exhibitions and robust online presence are additional means to disseminate our knowledge to a global audience.

We are all here today because we share a deep concern about what is happening around the globe.

Your presence gives us hope: Hope of overcoming Holocaust denial and distortion. Hope of securing individual rights and human dignity in all societies. And hope that the world we entrust to our children will be kinder and more tolerant than the one we inherited from our parents.

Despite the horrors they witnessed and endured, Holocaust survivors such as Rabbi Lau did not lose faith in humanity. They chose life and contributed to every society they joined.

In 2002, survivor representatives signed a declaration here at Yad Vashem. “To the next generations,” they wrote, “we pass on the Jewish message that memory leads to moral obligation. Memory must be the basis of action and the source of strength for building a better world.”



■ The nations' leaders commemorated the victims of the Holocaust by laying wreaths in memory of the six million Holocaust victims.



■ Holocaust survivor Naftali Deutsch recited “Kaddish,” the mourner’s prayer.



■ Holocaust survivors Rose Moskowitz from the United States and Colette Avital, Chairperson of the Center Organization of Holocaust Survivors in Israel, lit the memorial torch.

■ During the ceremony, a fully equipped Press Center operated from Yad Vashem’s International School for Holocaust Studies, with over 500 members of local and international press. Major global TV, radio and internet channels set up studios in the School building, interviewing Holocaust survivors as well as Yad Vashem experts, throughout the historic event.



# Book of Messages from World Leaders

■ In advance of the Fifth World Holocaust Forum, fifty world leaders who were invited to the event wrote letters stating their fervent and profound pledge to remember the Holocaust and to take measures to combat rising antisemitism. These statements were collated in a historic book which was presented to the leaders and guests attending the Forum.

As stated in the Foreword by Yad Vashem Chairman Avner Shalev and World Holocaust Forum Foundation President Dr. Moshe Kantor, "This book impressively illustrates the constructive potential of truthful remembrance and forthright action. It conveys a clear and vital message – Holocaust distortion and antisemitism have no legitimate place at any time, anywhere in the world."



**AUSTRALIA**

David John Hurley  
Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia

*Australia and Israel share a deep and enduring friendship... We honour the victims and survivors of the Holocaust... Australia is proud to be a part of the World Holocaust Forum 2020...*

**THE HOLY SEE**

His Holiness Francis  
Supreme Pontiff

*On the occasion of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp... I express my fervent hope that continued dialogue between the two peoples will lead to a more just and peaceful world...*

**POLAND**

Andrzej Duda  
President of the Republic of Poland

*The day of January 27, 1945, when the last surviving Auschwitz prisoners were liberated... We will continue to work for a more just and peaceful world...*

**CANADA**

Justin Trudeau  
Prime Minister of Canada

*The Holocaust is a stark reminder of the power of hatred... Canada is committed to remembering the victims and supporting survivors...*

**SPAIN**

King Felipe VI  
King of Spain

*The Holocaust is a dark chapter in human history... Spain is committed to remembering the victims and supporting survivors...*

**UNITED NATIONS**

António Guterres  
Secretary-General of the United Nations

*The Holocaust is a stark reminder of the power of hatred... The United Nations is committed to remembering the victims and supporting survivors...*

**UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

Donald J. Trump  
President of the United States of America

*The Holocaust is a stark reminder of the power of hatred... The United States is committed to remembering the victims and supporting survivors...*

**EUROPEAN UNION**

Charles Michel  
President of the European Council

Ursula von der Leyen  
President of the European Commission

David Sassoli  
President of the European Parliament

*The Holocaust is a stark reminder of the power of hatred... The European Union is committed to remembering the victims and supporting survivors...*

# Tackling Antisemitism Through Holocaust Education

■ Over the past few months, the world has witnessed violent and troubling antisemitic attacks in various countries, including France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom and the United States. In addition, recent surveys in North America and Europe have documented that longstanding antisemitic tropes are alive and well.

Yad Vashem has long understood the need to educate about the Holocaust as a tool for combatting antisemitism. Today, as the definitive source for Holocaust remembrance, documentation, research and education, it is working tirelessly not only to ensure that the memory and meanings of the Holocaust continue to be relevant, but also to use its comprehensive knowledge and carefully developed educational tools to fight contemporary forms of antisemitism.

## The Rapid Spread of Hate Speech

Dr. Robert Rozett, Senior Historian at Yad Vashem's International Institute for Holocaust Research, explains that while antisemitism did not disappear with the end of WWII, it became "less politically correct in many segments of society to have antisemitic opinions out in the open."

However, around the beginning of the twenty-first century, the situation started to change. "Since then, antisemitic incidents, including violent ones, have come more and more to the surface," Dr. Rozett continues. "In the last two years, violent antisemitism has even reached the United States, considered to be one of the most tolerant democracies in the world." In addition, the rapidly expanding digital world has enabled these violent messages to circulate exponentially around the world. "As the internet, followed by social media, became more and more popular, they became vehicles for disseminating antisemitic sentiment to the masses," says Dr. Rozett. "People can spread hate speech rapidly and to a vast audience via these vehicles – and so far, there is little to no oversight regulating the propagation of this material."

## A "Toolbox" Approach

It has become clear to Yad Vashem – and to many of its colleagues around the world – that the struggle against antisemitism requires a "toolbox" approach, tackling it from multiple angles: legal



■ Teachers attending a workshop on contemporary antisemitism at Yad Vashem

recourse, more rigorous policing of the internet and social media, building bridges between religious groups, and of course, education.

"We see education as the long-term and perhaps most profound tool in our battle against modern-day antisemitism," Dr. Rozett notes, "and we believe it is in this area that we can be most effective."

As such, Yad Vashem has developed new courses, workshops and online content that can assist teachers, opinion-makers, the media, researchers, religious groups and even politicians and diplomats on how to handle the rise in antisemitism in their own societies.

Aside from the dozens of international educational seminars Yad Vashem holds each year, it continues to advise policy-makers on the development of curricula for their individual country's Holocaust educational activities (see p. 9). And of course, education today is not restricted to the classroom, but occurs more and more online. Yad Vashem's websites in eight languages and its active social media presence are all invaluable assets to teachers in Israel and abroad.

## Massive Online Open Course on Antisemitism

One of the tools developed by Yad Vashem in recent years is a MOOC (Massive Online Open Course) tackling historical and contemporary antisemitism. The six-part course, entitled "Antisemitism: From its Origins to the Present," showcases 50 scholars from all over the world who explain the history, development and new forms of this oldest hatred, emphasizing the

common themes that may be easily identified in antisemitic expressions today.

So far, some 15,000 people have enrolled in the course, which is offered on both the UK FutureLearn and US Coursera educational online platforms. Of course, every country has its own particular histories, and consequently its own particular sensitivities and needs. Together with local educators and community leaders, Yad Vashem Societies worldwide have played a crucial role in identifying these needs and communicating them back to Jerusalem, where experts at Yad Vashem's International School for Holocaust Studies have been working hard to develop relevant courses and programs aimed at clearly identifying and exposing antisemitic expressions around the world.

## Workshops for Educators

"Over the past few years, teachers have been turning to Yad Vashem as the expert on the greatest manifestation of antisemitism in modern history – the Shoah," says Shulamit Imber, Pedagogical Director of the International School for Holocaust Studies and Fred Hillman Chair in Memory of Janusz Korczak. "While the circumstances and policies today are clearly not the same as in prewar Europe, there still exists the same 'language of hate,' which demonizes the Jewish people and encourages their discrimination and often their victimization. What is happening today is a continuation of the same anti-Jewish motifs that have been used throughout human history, and it is up to us to enable educators and other professionals to recognize this phenomenon and put a stop to it."



## Experts at Yad Vashem's International School for Holocaust Studies have been working hard to develop relevant courses and programs aimed at clearly identifying and exposing antisemitic expressions around the world

To this end, Yad Vashem recently developed a workshop for educators about contemporary antisemitism as part of its tailor-made seminars for teachers worldwide, which allow educators to easily identify dangerous stereotypes and the “language of hate” as triggers for discussion. Dr. Noa Mckayton, Deputy Director of the International School's European Department at Yad Vashem's International School for Holocaust Studies, helped develop this workshop.

Dr. Mckayton notes that in order to make this topic more relevant, she uses examples particular to the geographic location of the specific educators. “When teachers are confronted with what they fear is antisemitism, they feel lost and helpless,” she says. “But it doesn't have to be this way. Yad Vashem offers special tools and techniques to help teachers define and address antisemitism. Through this ‘toolbox’ approach, we have clear criteria for what is considered antisemitism. We help teachers identify the type of language that draws on traditional

antisemitic tropes developed and used for thousands of years – and definitively declare that these statements are indeed antisemitic.”

### Special Program for US Teachers

Yad Vashem's educational influence is not restricted to activities in the International School. In 2005, it expanded its role in the North American educational sphere with the creation of the “Echoes & Reflections” multimedia program, together with partner organizations, the ADL and the USC Shoah Foundation. This flagship program aims at empowering US middle- and high-school educators with dynamic materials and professional development to teach about the Holocaust in a productive and effective way.

In addition to nine other comprehensive units, “Echoes & Reflections” contains insightful content on both historical and contemporary antisemitism. Sheryl Ochayon is the “Echoes & Reflections” Program Director: “It is very important today for teachers in the United States

to have a game plan,” she says. “How should you react when you find a swastika daubed on a school or community center wall? What happens when graves are knocked down in your community? ‘Echoes & Reflections’ helps teachers identify antisemitic acts and consider practical steps in the event of such an incident.”

Additionally, the program provides teachers with materials that encourage youth not to be bystanders in the face of antisemitism. “Our educational programs place a great emphasis on responsibility,” Ochayon concludes. “We want to inspire and support students to take action in the face of racism and xenophobia. We teach and encourage pupils to make the choice to step up and speak out against antisemitism.”

*This article is based on one that appeared in The Jerusalem Post.*

*Yad Vashem's Antisemitism MOOC and educator workshops were developed in part thanks to the generosity of the Philigence Foundation (Geneva) and Israel's Ministry of Diaspora Affairs. “Echoes & Reflections” is generously supported by Dana and Yossie Hollander and The Snider Foundation.*

## Why, What and How? New Guidelines on Teaching the Holocaust Worldwide

■ Thanks to Yad Vashem's long-term and devoted partners in Holocaust Studies, The Asper Foundation, Yad Vashem experts were present at the recent launch of a new set of guidelines with the capacity to impact Holocaust education worldwide. Released at the end of 2019, the guidelines, entitled “Recommendations for Teaching and Learning about the Holocaust,” were launched to great acclaim during the December 2019 plenary meetings of IHRA (the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance) in Luxembourg, with all 34 member states of the IHRA undertaking to translate and distribute them within their respective countries.

“For approximately two decades, members of IHRA delegations, including Yad Vashem experts, have developed and distributed practical educational suggestions for teaching and learning about the Holocaust,” says Richelle Budd-Caplan, Director of International Relations at the International School for Holocaust Studies.

“We are pleased that this global initiative, which began in Yad Vashem's International School for Holocaust Studies in Jerusalem, has been updated for implementation in all IHRA member countries.”

The original 2001 guidelines examined “Why, What and How to Teach the Holocaust,” as well as visiting educational sites. However, noting global shifts in both teaching trends and understanding on the topic, it was decided to update the guidelines to reflect these changes. An IHRA team spearheaded the initiative, led by delegates from the Netherlands and the US, collecting valuable expert input, including from Yad Vashem.

The Delegation of the State of Israel to IHRA includes Yad Vashem's foremost experts in the fields of Holocaust history, research, documentation and education; among others. Yad Vashem Chairman Avner Shalev serves as Co-Head of the Delegation, alongside Israeli government officials. The ongoing participation

of Yad Vashem experts is made possible through the partnership of The Asper Foundation, who share Yad Vashem's dedication both to the goals of the IHRA and the necessity of strong, expert representation on the various working groups and committees which comprise the organization. As such, Yad Vashem remains at the forefront of international discourse on Holocaust remembrance, as well as combatting contemporary antisemitism and Holocaust denial.

“It is very fitting to begin 2020, marking 75 years following the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau and other Nazi camps, with the launch of this revised pedagogical resource,” said Avner Shalev. “Thanks to the enduring commitment of The Asper Foundation, we have been able to be closely involved in this international effort from the very beginning until today.”

*The new, updated recommendations may be downloaded from the IHRA website: [www.holocaustremembrance.com](http://www.holocaustremembrance.com)*

# Survivors: Faces of Life after the Holocaust

Deborah Berman

■ *"The Holocaust is something that happened to me, but I am more focused on the renewal. We always have to look ahead towards the future. There is always something to live for."*

Rachel Herszkovitz  
(b. 1940, Warsaw ghetto, Poland)

On 21 January 2020, a new exhibition entitled "Survivors: Faces of Life after the Holocaust" opened in the Ruhr Museum in Essen, Germany, in the presence of German Chancellor Angela Merkel.

Many of the survivors urge future Jewish generations to treasure and safeguard the State of Israel; others encourage young people to volunteer or seek out the good in others, in order to improve the world and give purpose to life

Co-curated by Yad Vashem Museums Division Director Vivian Uria and Anke Degenard of Germany, the exhibition is the fruit of a cooperative project between Yad Vashem and award-winning portrait photographer Martin Schoeller. The commemorative venture presents images of 75 Holocaust survivors from Israel, to mark the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz.

German-born Schoeller, one of the world's prominent contemporary portrait photographers, photographs all his subjects – whether public figures or anonymous individuals – in the same way, using special lighting and photographing in extreme close-up. The result in this case is compelling portraits that capture the weathered faces of Jewish men and women who lived through the atrocities of the Holocaust. Each photograph conveys more than words ever could. Every feature, presented in great detail



■ German Chancellor Angela Merkel: Safeguarding Holocaust memory for future generations | Jochen Taack/Stiftung Zollverein

and larger-than-life, provides a piece of personal and collective history.

For Schoeller, who has lived for some 25 years in the US, the project is a vehicle to combat hatred and rising antisemitism: "Growing up in Germany, it feels like we talked about the Holocaust in all of our classes," he explains.

"The legacy of the Shoah that these survivors nurtured with such fortitude and commitment is now bequeathed to us, and their hopes for a better future are now ours to treasure and to realize."

Avner Shalev

"I grew up with this incredible sense of guilt and shock, which led me to question my own identity. How could people from my country commit these horrendous crimes? I do think that people have a responsibility for their future. If everybody looked at their own history and tried

to learn from it and then went on to use that knowledge to better themselves and society, ultimately, I think that is what will bring us all forward as human beings."

Accompanying the portraits are messages from the survivors for the generations to come. Their tenacity and creativity empowered them to articulate meaningful ideas of renewed purpose for the Jewish people and for all the nations of the world – messages of human decency and



■ Martin Schoeller visiting Yad Vashem's Hall of Names accompanied by Chairman Avner Shalev

dignity. Many urge future Jewish generations to treasure and safeguard the State of Israel; others encourage young people to volunteer or seek out the good in others, in order to improve the world and give purpose to life.

Their words are replete with hope and faith in humanity. "People should remember that God created us all as equal beings," urges Yona Amit. "We must create a world based on respect, tolerance and equality." Sara Leicht echoes this sentiment: "The most important thing we can do is to love. To love more and to love everyone. To be kinder, more humble and more generous, and to be better people. To love our fellow human beings, whoever they are."

"The legacy of the Shoah that these survivors nurtured with such fortitude and commitment is now bequeathed to us, and their hopes for



The compelling portraits capture the weathered faces of Jewish men and women who lived through the atrocities of the Holocaust



■ The exhibition displays the portraits and messages of 75 Holocaust survivors | Jochen Tack/Stiftung Zollverein

a better future are now ours to treasure and to realize,” stated Yad Vashem Chairman Avner Shalev in advance of the exhibition’s opening. “As we go forward in the twenty-first century, we recommit to maintaining accurate Holocaust memory and to building more humane, tolerant and democratic societies for the sake of the generations to come.”

The project, an initiative of the Chairman of the Friends of Yad Vashem in Germany Kai Diekmann, also includes a book published by Steidl Press containing the 75 portraits together

with a foreword by former German President Joachim Gauck. The exhibition (including an accompanying short film), organized by the Foundation for Art and Culture based in Bonn, Germany, is being offered for display in museums throughout Europe and the rest of the world.

At the exhibition opening event, Chancellor Merkel stated: “Every lecture we hear, every memory we read, every photo we see, every memorial we visit, makes us aware of our responsibility, which is to safeguard the memory of the crimes committed by Germany during

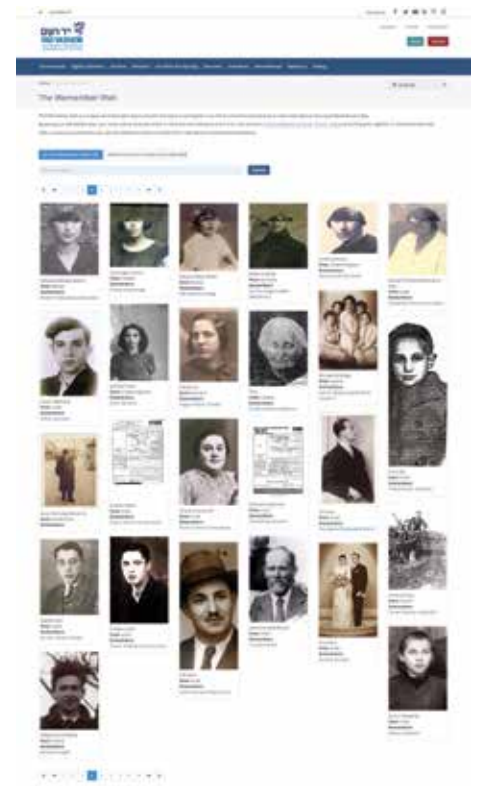
the Shoah. We owe it to every single victim. We owe it to everyone. And we owe it to future generations as well.”

Kai Diekmann noted the powerful impact of the project: “These heartrending portraits serve as a warning to us to remain ever-vigilant and watchful, and act as both a monument and as a reminder to learn from history.”

*“Survivors: Faces of Life after the Holocaust” was generously funded and supported by RAG-Stiftung.*

# Joining with Facebook to Remember Holocaust Victims

Marisa Fine and Gabi Duec



■ **Gabor Neumann was born on 10 February 1940 in Bekescsaba, Hungary.** The son of Elek and Margrit Neumann, Gabor was only four years old when he was deported to Auschwitz and murdered on 29 June 1944. Gabor is one of the 4,800,000 Jewish children, women, and men recorded in Yad Vashem's Central Database of Shoah Victims' Names.

This year, to mark International Holocaust Remembrance Day 2020 (27 January), Yad Vashem launched its IRemember Wall in six languages – English, Hebrew, French, Spanish, German and Russian. The participatory online project encourages the general public worldwide to commemorate the memory of Holocaust victims by randomly matching individuals with a victim from Yad Vashem's Names Database. Partnering with Facebook International to promote the project on social media, over 85,000 Holocaust victims were commemorated by participants in the project from over 175 countries.

"The IRemember Wall created a meaningful opportunity for people all over the world to remember a victim in their own language," explained Iris Rosenberg, Director of Yad Vashem's Communications Division. "By joining forces with Facebook, combined with

## Participants were encouraged to share information about the individual they were paired with on social media

the development of advanced technological features and interface by our Information Technology Division, we were able to reach a wider international audience, which is crucial in keeping the memory of the victims alive."

"I had the great privilege of visiting Yad Vashem in August 2019 and it was a moment I will never forget," stated Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg. "I am so grateful for all Yad Vashem does to honor the victims of the Holocaust – including this incredible IRemember Wall project. Facebook is honored to help tell the story of the millions of women, men, and children murdered by the Nazis... They deserve to be remembered, so such atrocities can never happen again."

This year, the IRemember Wall had a new feature: After being matched, participants could then add additional names of Holocaust

victims from the Names Database to the Wall. They were also encouraged to share information about the individual they were paired with on Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest.

"Immediately after launching the campaign, we saw thousands of people share the stories of Holocaust victims on social media," said Director of the Digital Department, Communications Division Dana Porath. "The IRemember Wall creates a real connection with a Holocaust victim you might never have heard about. It gives us the opportunity to remember victims who may have no one left to remember them today."

Thousands of moving comments were left on the IRemember Wall. "I remember Ilona Beldengrin," wrote Ilona Kotys from Austria. "Murdered 1942 in the death camp Belzec. She was my father's fiancée... I am the only one left who knows that she once existed in this world." Catherine Fischer from Canada wrote: "Thank you for giving us a place to acknowledge the individual and not just the statistics."

*The authors work in the Communications Division.*

# Treasures from the Collections

Noa Or

■ On 27 January 1945, Red Army soldiers entered the gates of Auschwitz-Birkenau and liberated the remaining prisoners of the notorious death camp. While the German army was retreating, tens of thousands of prisoners had been taken on a death march, and the liberators found the 7,000 prisoners remaining in the camp in grave condition, many of them dying.

Some of the items the camp survivors found at the time of liberation are housed at Yad Vashem in its Artifacts Collection. They tell about the feelings that accompanied them at the war's end, with the return to life and the beginning of many long years of coping with the crisis and great personal loss they suffered.

Two of these articles are now on display in the Visitors Center at Yad Vashem.

## Sweater for Life

■ Nine-year-old twins András and Károly Brichta were deported with their mother Margit to Auschwitz-Birkenau from Budapest, Hungary. The twins were separated from their mother and brought to the experimentation block of the infamous Dr. Josef Mengele.

A few days before liberation, András was sent to work in the camp warehouses. The place was freezing cold. András saw how one of the inmates who had taken a coat was shot to death. Despite this threat, he dared to steal a sweater to wear under the old and torn rags on his body.

A few days later, the twins found their mother in a shack, where many women were on the verge of death. While they were in the shack, they heard noises from outside. Rumors circled that the shacks in the Lublin ghetto had been set on fire with their inhabitants inside, and they feared that they would suffer a similar fate. András Brichta (later Mordechai Alon) later



■ Sweater and photograph (of Margit Brichta and her twin sons András and Károly): Yad Vashem Artifacts Collection. Courtesy of Mordechai Alon, Jerusalem  
Wallet and letter: Yad Vashem Artifacts Collection. Courtesy of Vladilyna Rubashevsky, Kiryat Ono

related: "Then the door of the shack opened and a soldier in a completely different uniform entered with this kind of submachine gun... he was a young guy, about 16 or 17. He came in... and a kind of wave of women, skeletons... murmured: "Ruski [Russian]," which passed throughout the shack. They came to him, and he stood there, speechless... it was clear, at least to me, that we had been liberated."



## Wallet of Gratitude

■ Yehudah Rubashevsky was among the Russian troops who liberated Auschwitz-Birkenau. As the only Yiddish-speaker among the soldiers, he was charged with looking after a group of 36 young Jewish women, aged 15-16, who had survived the camp. As a token of their gratitude for the help he gave them during their rescue and rehabilitation, when Rubashevsky had to leave the camp and continue fighting with his unit, the women sewed a wallet for him and embroidered it with his initials. Inside the wallet they hid a letter, which read: "In memory of the good deeds you performed for us. Signed, 36 young women liberated from Auschwitz."

Sixty years later, Rubashevsky's daughter donated the wallet to Yad Vashem. Research conducted by staff at the Artifacts Department revealed the identity of one of the women – Olga Klein-Kreisman – and an emotional meeting took place between the two families.

*The author works in the Artifacts Department, Museums Division.*

# Love Letter from Auschwitz

Ilona Angert



■ The letter sent by Pinhas Bornstein to his wife Ita in Auschwitz-Birkenau, January 1945 | Yad Vashem Archives

■ **“Itka, my love... how I have missed you so... Ever since I got your letter, I have not felt hungry any more... I think about you all the time, I feel good and the days go by quickly... Everything I got from you has been so nice, I felt that you were near me.”**



■ Ita and Pinhas Bornstein with their infant daughter Helen, Munich, 1947 | Yad Vashem Archives

The Jews of Zagłębie were politically and socially active, producing many scientists, industrialists and intellectuals

Ita and Pinhas met before the war. Their families lived in Będzin and Sosnowiec respectively, the central cities of the Zagłębie region on Poland’s western border, which was named for the natural resources buried in the earth.

The Bornsteins and the Koplovitches were representative of the region’s prewar Jewish communities: the former did business in timber, and the latter in fabrics. Although religion was an important part of life for both families, the children received a modern education. Both families were urbanites; their children spoke fluent Polish, and they enjoyed the Jewish community’s flourishing spiritual and cultural life. The Jews of Zagłębie were politically and

Pinhas Bornstein wrote these moving words to his wife Ita (née Koplovitch) in early January 1945. Yet he did not write them in any ordinary place. Placing his life in serious danger, he wrote surreptitiously and sent the letter from the Birkenau death camp to the laundry room of Auschwitz I.

Before they were separated during the *Selektion*, Ita and Pinhas promised each other to stay alive and reunite in Sosnowiec when the war was over



■ Helen Lazar (née Bornstein) donating her parents' precious letter to Yad Vashem, 2018

socially active within their communities on the one hand, and in local and state government on the other. These communities produced many Jewish scientists, industrialists and intellectuals.

The German army occupied Zagłębie in the first days of the war and the Jews immediately began to suffer: dozens were murdered in Będzin and Sosnowiec in the first days of the occupation, synagogues were set on fire, and various restrictive decrees were imposed on the Jews in the region. Shortly after the war broke out, Ita moved from Będzin to Sosnowiec, where she and Pinhas were married in 1941.

Later on, the Jewish community's freedom of movement in Zagłębie was restricted, they were frequently abducted and pressed into forced labor, and some were murdered at random by the Nazis.

A year later, the Nazis began gradually eliminating the Jews of Zagłębie. In the spring of 1943, after most of the Jews who had been found "unfit for work" were deported to Auschwitz; the ones who remained were locked in the ghettos. After a few months, the ghettos of Zagłębie were liquidated, and the

last Jews were deported to Auschwitz. The train in which Ita and Pinhas traveled reached the camp on 17 December 1943. Out of 800 Jews from Zagłębie who were sent to Auschwitz on that transport, 92 men and 169 women were found "fit for work," including Ita and Pinhas, and were transferred to the labor camps. The other 539 were sent straight to their deaths in the gas chambers of Birkenau.

Before they were separated during the *Selektion*, Ita and Pinhas promised each other to stay alive and reunite in Sosnowiec when the war was over. Pinhas was sent to Birkenau, and Ita to Auschwitz I, where she started working in the laundry. With the help of a Polish driver who took the dirty clothes from Birkenau to the laundry, Ita and Pinhas managed to maintain contact and send each other food, clothes and letters. They destroyed almost all the letters; only the last letter that Pinhas wrote to Ita on 7 January 1945 has been kept to this very day.

A few days after he sent the last letter to his wife, Pinhas left Auschwitz on a death march that ended in Ludwigslust, Germany. He was in

dire physical condition, so upon liberation he was transferred to an American field hospital. Ita stayed in Auschwitz for only a few more days, and after a short while in Ravensbrück she was deported to Leipzig, where she was liberated. She knew nothing about Pinhas's fate, but she remembered their promise, so she decided to go to Sosnowiec and wait for her husband against all the odds. After several months in which hope turned to despair, a miracle happened – Pinhas returned. They went to Munich, where Pinhas found work in the offices of the JDC. Their daughter Helen was born in 1947, and she immigrated to Israel in 1968. It was Helen

Helen recently gave the letter that sheds light on her parents' survival in Auschwitz to Yad Vashem for safekeeping

who recently gave the letter that sheds light on her parents' survival in Auschwitz to Yad Vashem for safekeeping through its national "Gathering the Fragments" program.

"It was important for me to turn the letter over to Yad Vashem for safekeeping so it wouldn't get lost after my death," said Helen Lazar (née Bornstein). "I was afraid my children wouldn't be able to safeguard it properly, and this way my parents' amazing story will be told for generations."

*Since the "Gathering the Fragments" campaign began in 2011, over 13,000 people have donated some 300,000 items, including 176,000 documents, 114,000 photographs, 5,200 artifacts, 755 works of art and 191 original films. Representatives of Yad Vashem visit Holocaust survivors or their family members in their homes, in addition to holding collection days in centers close to their place of residence, in order to gather Holocaust-era personal items. To schedule a meeting in Israel: +972-2-644-3888 or collect@yadvashem.org.il.*

*Yad Vashem runs the "Gathering the Fragments" campaign with the support of Israel's Ministry of Jerusalem and Heritage.*

*The author works in the Collection and Registration Section, Archives Division.*

## Graduate Spotlight

Every year, over 300,000 students and educators from Israel and around the world attend hundreds of educational activities, in a dozen languages, at the International School for Holocaust Studies. Featured here is one of the School's graduates, and what she has achieved since:



## Tamara Vershitskaya Belarus

■ *"It is important to remember and be inspired by the bravery of those who saved others during the Holocaust. I view the Jews who saved other Jews as great heroes. They helped save the final remnant of the Jewish people, who would later rebuild this great nation."*

Esther Debora Reiss-Mosel  
(b. 1938, Heiloo, Holland)

On 26 September 1943, 232 Jewish slave laborers incarcerated in the Novogrudok (Nowogródek) ghetto in Belarus (Eastern Poland from 1921 until 1939), broke out of the ghetto through a 200-meter-long tunnel which they secretly dug from one of the barracks. The 124 people who

make an unforeseen and unprecedented impact on the teaching and commemoration of the Holocaust in Belarus.

Due to the health risks involved with living in Mazyr, so close to the site of the nuclear reactor disaster in Chernobyl, Vershitskaya, her husband and daughter moved to Novogrudok, some 150 kilometers west of Minsk. There, she was offered the job of director of the Museum of History and Regional Studies. "This was right around the collapse of the Soviet Union," Vershitskaya recalls. "We were all fascinated to discover the area's history, yet in meeting survivors and listening to their stories I was



■ Tamara Vershitskaya

of Novogrudok Jews and the Holocaust in the Museum, and carried out an archeological survey on the territory of the former slave labor camp there to confirm the existence of the tunnel through which Jack

and the other inmates escaped. I wanted to share with other people what I had learned about the Holocaust, and how we could work together to preserve the memory about its tragic destruction."



■ An outdoor exhibition at the former site of the Novogrudok ghetto. The exhibition, which is based on testimonies of survivors, was financed by the Murray Kushner Family Foundation.

survived the escape joined partisan groups in the nearby forests.

However, during the almost half-century of Soviet power in the area, nothing was known about Jewish resistance in Novogrudok or the surrounding Naliboki forest, where the famous Bielski family camp existed until the liberation of the area in July 1944. This has changed dramatically in the past two decades, and in no small part due to the dedicated work of Tamara Vershitskaya.

Vershitskaya originally graduated from the Minsk Linguistic University, and began working as a teacher of English and German. However, in 1988 her life took a new turn, which would

confused by their attitude to Novogrudok. Their memories were painful, yet also full of love. They wanted to come and visit, but everything had changed and there was very little left to connect them to the town."

It was during a 1993 visit by Jack Kagan, a survivor of the escape from Novogrudok who lived in London, that Vershitskaya realized that something needed to be done. "Jack was shocked that there was no mention of the Jews of the area in the Museum, and I readily helped him work with the local authorities to place new monuments on the mass graves telling visitors exactly who the victims were. We also arranged a small permanent exhibition about the history

In 2003, together with Jerry Gotel from the London Jewish Cultural Center, Vershitskaya organized the first-ever Holocaust education seminar in Novogrudok for forty teachers from across Belarus, with guest lecturers including Yad Vashem's Dr. Irit Abramski, and Dr. Ilya Altman of the Moscow Holocaust Center. Since then, Vershitskaya has helped organize seminars for over 250 teachers, making Novogrudok the center of Holocaust education in Belarus.

In 2005, Vershitskaya and three other Belarusian teachers joined a Russian-language educational seminar in Yad Vashem. "The seminar helped me acquaint myself with the unique Holocaust education methods of Yad



## Save the Date: International Conference for Educators in Jewish Frameworks: 28-31 December 2020

■ At the end of 2020, the International School for Holocaust Studies of Yad Vashem will hold its Second International Conference for Educators in Jewish Frameworks.

Under the banner “Shoah Education: Questions, Challenges and Directions,” each day of the program will provide an in-depth analysis of a particular theme. The first day will focus on pedagogy and age-appropriate education, as the shift from trauma to emphasizing the human spirit when teaching the Shoah to students is investigated. The second day will deal with technology and how it has changed the way students learn today – and the challenges these changes have presented in particular to Shoah education. The third and final day of the conference will look at the phenomena of contemporary antisemitism, its impact and role in Jewish education, and what lessons may be derived on the topic from the study of the Holocaust.



In addition to featuring world-class scholars and experts in their fields, the conference will, as always, also be an opportunity for participants to meet other teachers, principals, informal educators and community rabbis from around the world to share and learn from each other. It is a unique opportunity to participate in an event that will impact not only the participants' own schools, but also the Jewish community worldwide.

For more information on the conference, and to apply: [www.yadvashem.org/education](http://www.yadvashem.org/education)

Vashem, which on the one hand provides the background for understanding the universal relevance of the Holocaust, and on the other hand stresses the individual and local perspective.” As a result of what she learned, Vershitskaya has since brought dozens of secondary school teachers and university lecturers to Jerusalem to attend educational seminars at Yad Vashem's International School for Holocaust Studies. With the support of international organizations and private donors, such as Jack Kagan himself, Vershitskaya has also created the Jewish Resistance Museum in a former barrack of the ghetto, as well as memorials and an outdoor exhibition relating the story of the tunnel escape based on the testimonies of survivors.

**"I saw how the reunion of descendants of the Bielski partisans last July made such a difference to Holocaust memory and education."**

Tamara Vershitskaya

Vershitskaya's current project is to help fully research, preserve and memorialize the famous Jewish partisan family camp led by the Bielski brothers, who hailed from Stankiewiczze, a town near Novogradok.

"I would like to identify and mark every dugout in the Bielski camp, reconstruct some of them, and then recommend young Israelis and other Jews who come to Poland on a traditional trip of discovery to also visit the Jewish Resistance Museum in Novogradok and the Naliboki Forest to see the other side of the Holocaust," says Vershitskaya. "I saw how the reunion of descendants of the Bielski partisans last July made such a difference to Holocaust memory and education. I want this story to live."

*The theme of this year's Holocaust Remembrance Day (21 April 2020) is "Rescue by Jews during the Holocaust: Solidarity in a Disintegrating World."*

## New Online Course: “Chosen Issues in Holocaust History”

■ How did the “Final Solution” develop? What was “Operation Barbarossa”? What happened during the turning point of September–December 1941? And what lay between general aspects of the Holocaust and local phenomena – between Berlin and those who carried out the decisions in the field?

Seventy-five years after the Holocaust and subsequent in-depth research, a new online course called “Chosen Issues in Holocaust History” is due to go online this summer, on the US Coursera learning platform.

The course features discussions by leading Holocaust historians about key topics concerning the Holocaust and its background, including antisemitism, the Weimar Republic, the Nazis' rise to power, the evolution and substance of the Nazi worldview, and the lives, responses and possible courses of action available to German Jews under Nazi occupation. It allocates considerable space to the critical years 1939–1941, and the chapters dedicated to them raise questions about territorial solutions to the “Jewish Question,” the role of the ghettos in the development of the “Final Solution,” everyday life in the ghettos, and the Jewish leadership in them. The “Final Solution” is discussed in depth, integrating new research and extensive study of WWII.

Dr. Na'ama Shik



The victims' lives are also a main focus – how did Jews function in the face of ubiquitous death, and what was life like in the camps? The course also presents and discusses the topic of liberation, which brought about the end of the war and the Holocaust, as well as the beginning of the survivors' long journey to rebuild their lives.

The course concludes with a fascinating collage of speakers – historians, intellectuals and authors – who investigate Holocaust reflection in the twenty-first century, in topics related to Holocaust studies and remembrance.

*The author is Director of the e-Learning Department, International School for Holocaust Studies.*

# “Children in the Holocaust”



■ Dollhouse created by Leah Burnstein, Debrecen ghetto, Hungary | Yad Vashem Artifacts Collection

■ **“Children are not the people of tomorrow, rather, they are people of today. They have a right to be taken seriously, and to be treated with tenderness and respect. They should be allowed to grow into whoever they were meant to be. ‘The unknown person’ inside of them is our hope for the future.”**

Janusz Korczak

Approximately one-and-a-half million Jewish children were murdered in the Holocaust; few survived. Some children were able to escape by hiding – finding shelter wherever possible, constantly in fear of being discovered and dependent on the occasional goodwill of strangers. Other children survived by concealing their identities, facing constant fear and danger, where a wrong word could lead to discovery and death.

Unbelievably, as they struggled to hold on to life, many Jewish children attempted to maintain their childhood and youth by creating for themselves a different reality from that which surrounded them. They made makeshift toys, drew scenes of their new reality or from their imagination, wrote letters, poems and diaries, and clung to any remaining vestige of their



■ Petr Ginz (1928-1944), *Street in Theresienstadt* | Yad Vashem Art Collection

homes. In many cases, it was the children who gave their parents the encouragement and hope to continue the desperate daily fight for survival.

To mark International Children’s Day, and to answer the high demand for material on the experience of Jewish children during the Shoah, Yad Vashem launched a new online exhibition in November 2019, entitled “Children in the Holocaust.” The exhibition features children’s toys, games, artworks, letters, diaries and albums, all carefully preserved in Yad Vashem’s Collections, and which appear across the Yad Vashem website as part of other online presentations on a variety of Holocaust-related topics. In addition, the new exhibition brings testimonies from survivors who shared their childhood experiences from before, during and immediately after the Holocaust.

Below are a selection of some of the items featured in the new exhibition:

## Memories of Home

■ In the Debrecen ghetto, Hungary, Leah Burnstein made a dollhouse with figurines in the image of her parents, as a reminder of the home from which they were deported. Leah

was sent to the Strasshof concentration camp in Austria. In the camp, Leah found a book cover with which she covered her cardboard “house.” Leah survived and immigrated to Eretz Israel, bringing her “childhood home” with her. The story of the dollhouse is included in the ready2print exhibition “Stars Without a Heaven: Children in the Holocaust.”

## Art as Testimony

■ Born in Prague in 1929, Petr Ginz was a multi-talented youth, who drew and wrote essays, short stories and poems from an early age. Following the German occupation of Czechoslovakia, he was expelled from school due to the racial laws. In 1942, he was deported to Terezin where he continued to draw and write. Together with friends in the youth barracks, Ginz edited and published the clandestine newspaper *Vedem* (We Are Leading). In the fall of 1944, he was deported to Auschwitz, where he was murdered immediately upon arrival. His artwork appears in the Education and E-Learning section of the Yad Vashem website, in the teacher-training video entitled “Artists of Terezin.”

"...AND WITH THE MARCH OF HATEFULNESS, BUT OUR PEOPLE AS USUAL  
 WERE A BOUNTY TO BE TAKEN SERVICIOUSLY AND TO BE REDEEMED WITH FLEASHERS AND  
 BEHOLD, THIS SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO SHOW THE MARCHERS EARLY WITH THE  
 BY THE 'MARCHERS' BEHOLD' AND BY THE MARCHERS EARLY WITH THE  
 ..."



The exhibition features children's toys, games, artworks, letters, diaries and albums, all carefully preserved in Yad Vashem's Collections



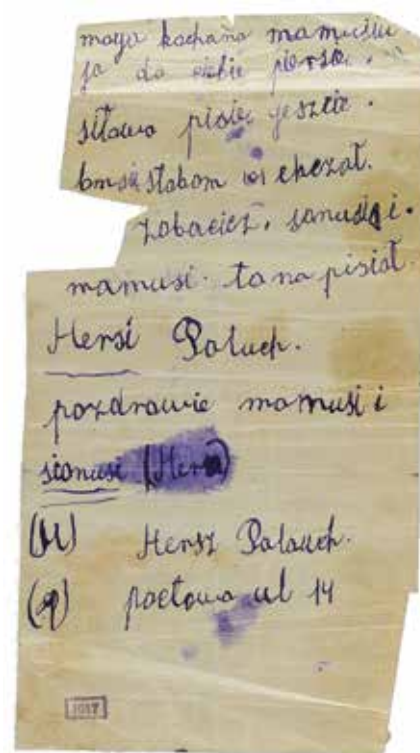
■ Stefa Fromer (left) and Jasia Gandz, Otwock children's home, Poland | Yad Vashem Archives

### Capturing a Moment

■ Stefa Fromer and Jasia Gandz met in the children's home in Otwock, Poland, after the war. Jasia Gandz was the second child to arrive in the home. By June 1945 approximately 130 child survivors were living there. Most of the educators and staff were also Holocaust survivors, who saw in their work a sense of mission and destiny, an answer to the loss they had experienced in the Holocaust. The photograph of the girls is part of the online exhibition, "A Time to Heal: The Story of the Children's Home in Otwock, Poland."

### Efforts to Connect

■ "My beloved mother, I am writing to you. I want to see you..." These words are taken from the last letter of 13-year-old Hersch Paluch, sent from the Końskie ghetto in 1941, to his mother Helena in Argentina. Hersch was murdered in Treblinka in 1942, despite desperate efforts by his mother to secure a visa for him to Argentina. The letter appears in the online exhibition, "We Shall Meet Again: Last Letters from the Holocaust, 1941."



■ The last letter of Hersch Paluch, Końskie ghetto | Yad Vashem Archives

# The Holocaust in the Soviet Union in Real Time

■ **The Nazis invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941, and immediately began the mass murder of Jews.** By the end of that year, more than half a million Jewish men, women and children had been executed in Nazi-occupied territories of the USSR.

How did people in the Soviet Union react to the events of the Holocaust during the war and in the years following? This topic was widely discussed in an international conference, entitled “The Holocaust as Reflected in Public Discourse in the Soviet Union during the Stalinist Period, 1941–1953,” held in December 2019. Sixteen scholars from universities around the world, including The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Columbia University, Bar-Ilan University and the University of Toronto, gathered at Yad Vashem to present their research and discuss the topic.

“The conference primarily focused on how the Jewish intellectuals in the Soviet Union responded to the news of the horrific events that were occurring throughout Europe,” explains Dr. Arkadi Zeltser, Director of the Moshe Mirilashvili Center for Research on the Holocaust in the Soviet Union at Yad Vashem’s International Institute for Holocaust Research, which organized the conference. “Jewish and non-Jewish intellectuals, writers, cinematographers, painters, folklorists and theater folk felt obligated to react to the Jewish tragedy. Despite the official Soviet narrative that emphasized the killing of the Jews as Soviet citizens, these individuals still managed to transmit the idea that they were murdered purely because they were Jews.”

Recent research has demonstrated that during WWII, those who wanted to know about the destruction of European Jewry had opportunities to do so from both the mainstream Russian press as well as the Yiddish-language newspaper *Eynikayt* – the only Soviet Yiddish newspaper at the time.

In wartime, Russian Jewish writers were permitted to write about Jewish heroes such as Bar-Kochba and the Maccabees, and especially about Jewish soldiers in the Red Army, but they had to incorporate Russian elements into their work as well. Consequently, says Dr. Zeltser, “they looked for a way to emphasize the Jewish perspective, while officially maintaining the Soviet line.”

Conference sessions focused also on the Yiddish writings of Russian Jewish poets such as David Hofshsteyn and Peretz Markish, and prose writers such as David Bergelson and Pinchas Kaganovich, known by the pen name *Der Nister* (the Hidden One). Kaganovich wrote stories about the German persecution of Jews in occupied Poland during the war. In 1942, he became a member of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee, which was formed on orders of Joseph Stalin. The committee influenced public opinion and organized support for the Soviet struggle against Germany. Some of the most prominent Yiddish writers in the Soviet Union at the time – including Bergelson, Markish and others – were not only members, but also wrote for this committee about the Holocaust and the struggle against the Germans, thus emphasizing Jewish identity.

“They looked for a way to emphasize the Jewish perspective, while officially maintaining the Soviet line.”

Dr. Arkadi Zeltser

Other sessions at the conference addressed how Yiddish folklorists wrote about the Holocaust during the war. “It is interesting,” notes Dr. Zeltser, “to learn about and contrast the writings of Jews who wrote about the war in Yiddish but were not intellectuals.” Some of these writings were composed in the ghettos, while others were written in the unoccupied territories of the Soviet Union.

Another topic of interest, beyond the writings of Jewish writers, is what was written in the official Soviet press about the Holocaust during that period. Dr. Zeltser explains that Russian newspapers wrote about the murder of Jews at the time. For example, he notes, the first mention of the massacre of the Jews in Minsk in July 1941 appeared in both *Izvestia* and *Pravda* just a few weeks after it occurred. The Russian press covered mass killings that were taking place throughout the occupied territories, including at Babi Yar, where some 33,700 Jews from Kiev and the surrounding



■ Yiddish poets Avraham Sutzkever and Peretz Markish. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum | Courtesy of Hadass Kalderon

areas were brutally shot to death and buried in mass graves during the two-day *aktion* on 29–30 September 1941.

The Russian press knew about the murder of the Jews, claims Dr. Zeltser, because mass shootings in places like Babi Yar and elsewhere generally took place near population centers. While he says it is hard to estimate the exact percentage of the population that was aware of

Alan Rosenbaum

what was happening, the majority, especially those who found themselves under the German occupation, knew.

Interestingly, says Dr. Zeltser, the main Communist Party newspaper *Pravda* estimated in a December 1944 article by Ilya Ehrenburg – a prominent Russian Jewish author – that six million Jews had been killed by the Nazis. This was before even *The New York Times* acknowledged the number.

In addition to writings on the Holocaust in the Soviet Union, the conference also discussed other means by which information was disseminated during the period, such as through photography and museum exhibitions. Prof. David E. Fishman of the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York presented a lecture about the Jewish Museum in Vilnius, which was founded in 1944 by Holocaust survivors. This was the first museum in Eastern Europe to show a record of the mass killings of the Jews by the Nazis and their collaborators. The museum was closed down by the Soviets in 1949 during a major antisemitic campaign.

The conference looked at the impact of photographs taken by Russian photographer Dmitri Baltermants, one of the many Jewish-Russian combat photographers during WWII, who captured images of the German destruction of Soviet Jews during the war. In January 1942, Baltermants recorded the desolation and destruction of the city of Kerch in Crimea. His photographs, which were censored for many years in the USSR, finally appeared in Russia during the 1960s.

Another once-censored work discussed at the conference was *The Black Book of Soviet Jewry*, which was compiled in 1944 by Vasily Grossman and Ilya Ehrenburg. The book, which was first printed by Yad Vashem in 1980, documents the crimes of the Holocaust in the German-occupied territories. It was finally printed in the USSR during the period of *Perestroika* under Russian president Mikhail Gorbachev.

*This is the fourth annual International Conference organized and hosted by the Moshe Mirilashvili Center for Research on the Holocaust in the Soviet Union, at Yad Vashem's International Institute for Holocaust Research. It was generously supported by Michael and Laura Mirilashvili and the Euro-Asian Jewish Congress.*

*A version of this article originally appeared in The Jerusalem Post.*

## International Book Prize Winners 2019

■ Yad Vashem's International Book Prize for Holocaust Research was recently awarded to Omer Bartov for *Anatomy of a Genocide: The Life and Death of a Town Called Buczacz* (Simon & Schuster, 2018), and Joanna Tokarska-Bakir for *Pod Kłatwą: Społeczny portret pogromu kieleckiego* (Cursed: A Social Portrait of the Kielce Pogrom) (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Czarna Owca, 2018). The prestigious prize is awarded annually to authors of outstanding research on the Holocaust.

Since 2018, the Yad Vashem Book Prize has been awarded in memory of Benny and Tilly Joffe z"l, thanks to the generosity of their son Brian, his wife Lee and their family.

Dusia Krechmer spoke on behalf of the family at the event, and described how she recently watched a cousin's testimony for the first time. "Testimonies will be the only proof that the Holocaust happened," she said. "Events such as this mean that we can continue to commemorate those who were murdered during the Holocaust, as well as Holocaust survivors who are no longer with us today."

### "We live in times when the past is coming back."

Joanna Tokarska-Bakir

Bartov delivered a fascinating lecture, in which he used the town of Buczacz in Eastern Europe, the hometown of Nazi hunter Simon Wiesenthal, Nobel Prize laureate S.Y. Agnon and Oneg Shabbat Archive founder Emanuel Ringelblum – as well as Bartov's own mother – as an example of the Holocaust on a local level, and the nature of the encounter between the perpetrators and the victims. Citing the laudable prewar interethnic coexistence between Poles, Ukrainians and Jews, he named nineteenth-century nationalism and the violence of WWI as key catalysts for the breakdown of the social order and the view of Jews by both ethnic groups as "enemies of their nationalist goals." Having suffered under interwar Polish and then Soviet rule, Ukrainian nationalists were therefore only too ready to aid the Germans in their murderous policy against the hapless Jewish community. "Our perception of the Holocaust



■ Top: prizewinner Omer Bartov; bottom, left to right: Yad Vashem Chairman Avner Shalev with prize donors Brian and Lee Joffe, prizewinner Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, and Prof. Dan Michman

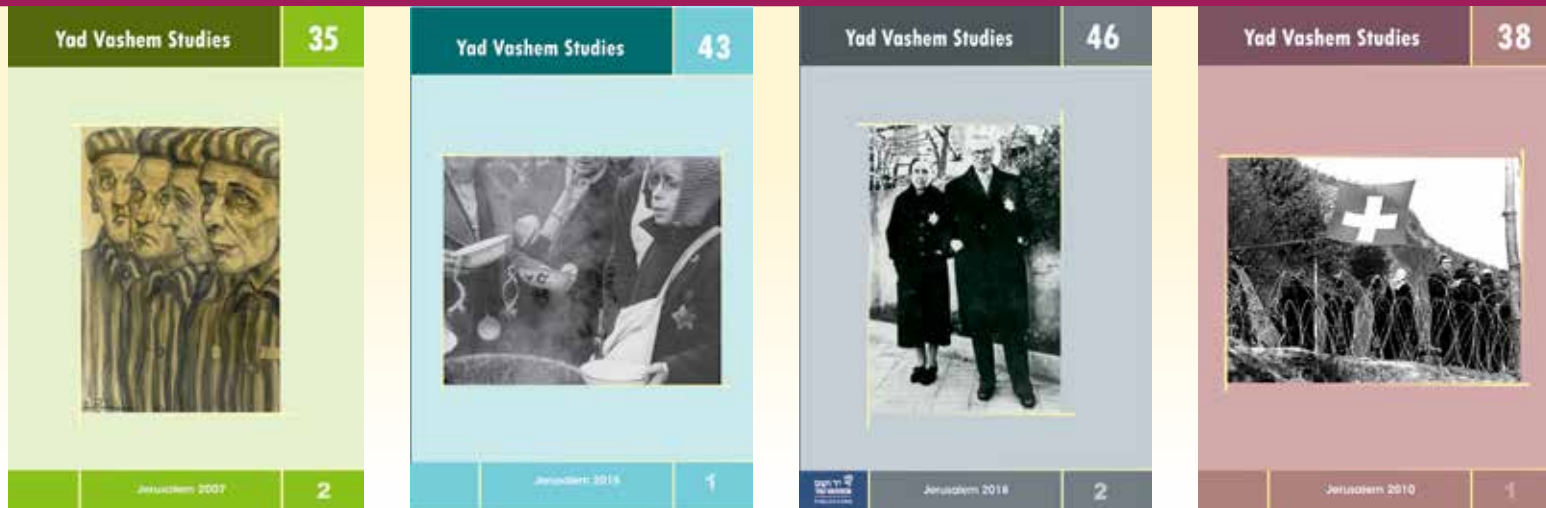
is greatly complicated when the event is seen 'from below,' Bartov claimed. "The sense of security we have in our own neighborhoods is often based on a thin crust of social order and respect that can easily be overturned by way of identifying certain groups as outside the bounds of human solidarity, and by turning the forces of law and order against those marked for expulsion, incarceration or death."

Tokarska-Bakir presented in her interesting lecture how she investigated every piece of documentation and testimony about Kielce she could lay her hands on in order to create a "social portrait of the pogrom." She also made a point of trying to discover not what caused the pogrom, but how it was made possible. "Cursed is first and foremost a tribute to the over forty victims of the pogrom," she stated. "But it is also a tribute to the survivors, who, despite all, found in themselves a will to live... We live in times when the past is coming back. And I believe that each and every one of us can do something about it."

# Yad Vashem Studies

## The Cutting Edge of Holocaust Research

Leah Goldstein



■ In January 2020, Senior Historian at Yad Vashem's International Institute for Holocaust Research Dr. David Silberklang moved from his position as Editor-in-Chief of *Yad Vashem Studies*, Yad Vashem's flagship academic journal. Dr. Silberklang is currently co-authoring and editing *The Comprehensive History of the Holocaust – Poland*, part of the *Comprehensive History of the Holocaust* book series that Yad Vashem is publishing in English and Hebrew.

In a special interview for *Yad Vashem Jerusalem*, Dr. Silberklang reflected upon more than two decades in the position, and how the journal has become the leading source for research papers on Holocaust-related topics:

**What were you working on before you became Editor-in-Chief of *Yad Vashem Studies*, and what were your goals for the journal going forward?**

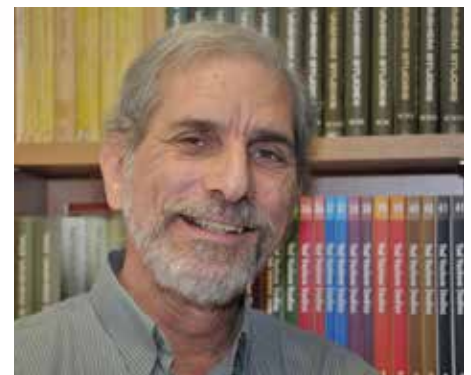
When I became Editor-in-Chief of *Yad Vashem Studies* in June 1996, I was a doctoral student at The Hebrew University and the Historian of Yad Vashem's Museum Development Project. I left the latter position a year later, having completed writing the historical conceptual outline for Yad Vashem's new Holocaust History Museum [which opened in 2005].

I succeeded Dr. Aharon Weiss as Editor-in-Chief of *Yad Vashem Studies* after working for ten years as Assistant Editor of *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* under the editorship of [Yad Vashem Academic Advisor] Prof. Yehuda Bauer.

Well over 1,000 articles have crossed my desk, submitted in a dozen languages by authors in some 30 countries on six continents

From the outset, I established certain goals for the journal, such as enhancing its international profile and academic reputation, towards which I instituted a stricter and more international peer review process in which four or five readers per article is common. My academic correspondents around the world grew to many hundreds, and many of them submitted articles and peer reviewed submissions for us. Over the past 23 years, well over 1,000 articles have crossed my desk, submitted in a dozen languages by authors in some 30 countries on six continents. Less than 25 percent of research articles were accepted for publication, reflecting our high standards.

One thing is clear: This position had me at the cutting edge of research on the Holocaust during some of the major advances in this field. I was able to play an important role in disseminating high-caliber scholarly knowledge and analytical insight on the Holocaust in thirty-five volumes in English and in Hebrew that included 390 articles (213 research; 146



■ Dr. David Silberklang

review; and 31 analyzing the work of recently deceased scholars) on numerous subjects – a significant body of work from which the staff and I can derive great satisfaction.

**How has *Yad Vashem Studies* expanded its scope over the years?**

During my tenure, we expanded the temporal and geographic scopes of *Yad Vashem Studies* and have attracted articles from an array of disciplines – history, anthropology, archaeology, art history, commemoration, literature, musicology, philosophy and theology, psychology, sociology and more. I introduced a new section with in-depth review articles of recent important books on the Holocaust – 146 articles by more than 110 reviewers, on 176 books published in numerous languages to date.

Many of the new topics and new findings that were brought to light in these articles continue to reverberate and generate discussion



I also added an Editor's Introduction to each issue, instituted a style guide, and updated and modernized the cover design, and in 2007 we went to a semi-annual format. We also publish much more visual material – many dozens of photographs, maps and tables, for example – which has enriched our academic discussion.

**What are some of the challenges and rewards you found in this position?**

The challenges and rewards have been many. Some of the rewards are clear: an outstanding staff and a wonderful editorial board, whose awe-inspiring collective knowledge, wisdom and insight kept me on my toes; the opportunity to learn constantly (even from the articles that were rejected); the many contacts that I developed over the years with scholars and others around the world; and the numerous thoughtful conversations that I had with scholars, both experienced veterans and eager novice researchers.

Helping authors edit and improve their articles has been both challenging and often greatly rewarding. Combining and distilling the (anonymous) peer reviewers' assessments into a clear and helpful summary of comments for the author is an important part of the work. All the articles we published clearly benefited from this process. This connects also to the fact that *Yad Vashem Studies* publishes in two languages (every article appears in both English and Hebrew). In the course of translating

and editing, we inevitably find discrepancies, sometimes substantive, which often send us back to the author for clarification. In many instances, we uncovered errors in the original that the authors had not noticed and for which they were always grateful. Our labor-intensive work has resulted in better and more accurate articles.

**How has Holocaust research developed since you took up the post?**

The 1990s saw the opening of archives in the former Soviet Union and elsewhere, and the subsequent beginning of published research using this documentation. As a result, we were able to publish numerous path-breaking articles, such as heretofore unknown diaries from the Holocaust; Polish attitudes toward Jews during the Holocaust; the roundups and deportations of Jews from Western Europe; and aspects of the Holocaust that were previously barely known – regarding the USSR, Salonika, Finland, Arrow Cross leader Ferenc Szálasi and Romanian Orthodox Patriarch and political leader Miron Cristea, Portugal's role in laundering Nazi gold theft, how WWII museums in former communist countries relate to the Holocaust, and more. Many of the new topics and new findings that were brought to light in these articles continue to reverberate and generate discussion, such as those on how local populations related to the Jews during and after the Holocaust. We have even published two special volumes of

*Yad Vashem Studies* in Russian in order to make some important research available to Russian readers.

**Where do you think Holocaust research is headed in the third decade of the twenty-first century?**

It is difficult to predict where Holocaust research will head in the coming years. Numerous subjects await comprehensive research. For example, most localities have yet to be researched, many regional studies have yet to be completed, and forced labor, ubiquitous to Jewish experience during the Holocaust, is still a relatively under-researched subject. I can list many more topics that have not yet been researched thoroughly, as well as fundamental questions for which we do not yet have satisfactory answers. Of one thing I am confident: There is still much to research and much that we do not yet understand. Scholars will need many years to go through hundreds of millions of pages of relevant documentation, and many more years for us to digest what this documentation tells us. I am confident that my successor, Dr. Sharon Kangisser-Cohen [Director of the Diana and Eli Zborowski Center for Research into the Aftermath of the Holocaust at Yad Vashem's International Institute for Holocaust Research] will embrace this challenge and help implement even higher standards and more wide-ranging explorations in the field of Holocaust research.

# Fellows Corner: Dr. Chiara Renzo



■ From October–December 2019, Dr. Chiara Renzo was the recipient of the fellowship supported by The Baron Friedrich Carl von Oppenheim Chair for the Study of Racism, Antisemitism, and the Holocaust, established at Yad Vashem’s International Institute for Holocaust Research. Her research focused on Holocaust survivors who between 1943 and 1951 temporarily lived as displaced persons (DPs) in the refugee camps of Italy.

Dr. Renzo began this investigation for her PhD dissertation on the topic. Over the last two years, as a postdoctoral fellow in Jewish History at Ca’ Foscari University of Venice, she conducted her research on Jewish displaced children after the Holocaust, exploring the policy of humanitarian organizations and the strategies of the Jewish Agency in rehabilitating and resettling them.

Holocaust Studies. “Instead, from my research Italy emerges as a key military, political and humanitarian site for Jewish survivors longing to start a new life after the war, and not necessarily only in *Eretz Israel*.”



■ Dr. Chiara Renzo

Working with a wide variety of sources – institutional reports and correspondence produced by the rescue networks as well as the oral and written testimonies of Jewish DPs – Dr. Renzo discussed the two different waves of refugees that arrived in Italy during and after the war. The first were Jews from Germany,

the help of the *Bricha* rescue organization after the end of the war. At this stage, international refugee agencies and Jewish organizations became responsible for the care, rehabilitation and resettlement of these displaced, traumatized and disoriented Jews. The UN agencies, in collaboration with the JDC and the emissaries of the representatives of the Zionist youth movements from the *Yishuv*, set up Hebrew schools, vocational training and recreational activities for the Jewish DPs in Italy.

Notwithstanding the drastically limited *aliya* policy of the British authorities, Zionist propaganda (especially from socialist youth movements) predominated the refugee camps of Italy. In this context, ultra-Orthodox Jewish DPs – feeling discriminated and non-represented – started to reorganize their Chassidic life with the help of Rabbi Leibel Kutner, a survivor from Gur (Góra Kalwaria), Poland. “In order to establish a religious public life and religious educational institutions in the refugee camps, they asked the Jewish Agency to send emissaries of Agudat Israel and Mizrahi, who arrived in Italy only at the end of 1945.”

Dr. Renzo concluded her lecture with the events following the establishment of the State of Israel, and the subsequent mass migration from the DP camps in Europe. “After May 1948, a few hundred Jewish DPs in Italy changed their mind regarding *aliya*,” Dr. Renzo said. “Two main factors influenced this change. On the one hand, rumors regarding the hard life in the newly established state discouraged some from planning *aliya*. On the other, the United States was about to implement the DP Bill, a law that provided for the admission to the US of around 400,000 European DPs for permanent residence. Many DPs still in refugee camps saw this as a better opportunity for resettlement.”

“The experience of the Holocaust survivors in DP camps in Italy is often represented as a collective experience,” Dr. Renzo concluded. “Instead, the sources I have found in Yad Vashem confirmed that they came from different backgrounds, had different needs in the refugee camps, and held different goals for the future. Stuck in these sites of transit, struggling between their traumatic past and the desire to start a new life, the Jewish DPs in Italy became the protagonists of a fascinating story of rebirth and hope.”



■ Children at the “Maor Hagola” Yeshiva established by Rabbi Ephraim Oshry (of Kaunas, Lithuania) in a DP camp in Rome, Italy after WWII | Yad Vashem Archives

The research fellowship at Yad Vashem allowed Dr. Renzo to give voice to two overlooked groups of Jewish DPs: the ultra-Orthodox survivors, and the so-called “non-Palestine-oriented” survivors. “For decades, historiography and collective memory consolidated the image of postwar Italy as the ‘Gate to Zion,’ emphasizing almost exclusively the role of this country as a staging area for the Jewish refugees’ illegal departure to *Eretz Israel* (British Mandatory Palestine),” explained Dr. Renzo, who gave the Annual Lecture of the John Najmann Chair of

Austria, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia who had fled their countries during the German occupation, and arrived in Italy before 1945. These “old refugees” were aided by soldiers of the Jewish Brigade of the British army, as well as chaplains from the Allied forces – who presented immigration to *Eretz Israel* as the best answer to their situation, and set up *hachsharot*, or training centers, to prepare the refugees, and especially the youth, for *aliya*.

The second group, the so-called “new refugees,” reached Italy mainly via the Alps with



## New on the Names Database: Linking Information from Different Sources for the Same Victim

Zvi Bernhardt

■ The most well-known records in Yad Vashem's Central Database of Shoah Victims' Names are the commemorative Pages of Testimony. However, the Names Database includes hundreds of other sources. Some of these – for instance, the listing of those Jews deported from Germany developed by the German National Archive – are electronic records from other organizations. Others are

Multiple sources that appear for a given person have now been collated together for easier research purposes

bibliographical records, such as lists from *Yizkor* (memorial) books, and archival records like the card catalogue of prisoners from Mauthausen.

In the vast majority of cases, only one source appears for each victim in the Names Database. However, in many other cases, multiple sources appear for a given person, which have now been collated together for easier research purposes.



Through Yad Vashem's upgraded internet interface, all the different sources for a particular victim are displayed together, although they may still be viewed separately. One can also request all the documentation related to a particular family, and download the information provided to a personal device.

Over one million names of those who were murdered in the Holocaust are still missing from

the Names Database. "As always, public input is highly appreciated," says Hall of Names Director Dr. Alexander Avram. "There still is much to be done, and as new sources are continuously added to the Names Database, this is an ongoing endeavor that will continue until every last name of the six million Holocaust victims is recorded."

*The author is Deputy Director of the Hall of Names, Archives Division.*

## Experts Workshop: The Use and Misuse of Source-based Material in the Digital Era

Hillel Solomon

■ Collecting sources is the basis for any form of research, education or commemoration activity. Thus, the ability to know the degree of authenticity of the documentation, where it was before it was discovered, and what is its exact context, is paramount. This is always true, and it is even more important in the field of Holocaust documentation, because accuracy is of both historical and moral importance.

The ever-greater use of technology in the service of document accessibility raises new and complex questions in both the professional and ethical spheres. In the digital age, the question of what constitutes an "original source" becomes even more complex than in the past, as original documents are scanned and made available as digital files. These are more accessible, but are

also exposed to manipulation. Likewise, access to documentation is greater than ever, but alongside it, the distance between the source and its users has increased, making it difficult to verify authenticity and understand the context.

All of these issues formed the basis for presentation and in-depth discussion at a workshop held at Yad Vashem in November 2019, entitled "The Source: Holocaust Sources – Truth, Interpretation and (Mis)Use in the Digital Era." Some 30 researchers, archivists, cataloguing and technology experts, conservation specialists, documentary creators, and education and communication professionals from Europe, North America and Israel gathered to share their approaches and thoughts regarding the place of the "original source" in the digital age.

Topics included approaches of various projects to authenticity, accessibility and use of Holocaust archival sources; original versus digital copies in the academic use of Holocaust sources; methodologies for ensuring trust in digital archives; dilemmas of physical conservators; preserving context in the digital world; challenges involved in the use of digital copies for online educational materials and apps; as well as ethical questions regarding the boundaries of the manipulation of materials, social media campaigns, and more.

*"The Source" experts workshop was held with the support and cooperation of the Foundation "Remembrance, Responsibility and Future" (EVZ).*

*The author works in the Archives Division.*

# Friends Worldwide

## The Fifth World Holocaust Forum

On 22 January, Yad Vashem's International Relations Division hosted a Welcoming Dinner at the Carlton Tel Aviv Hotel for its friends and supporters prior to attending the Fifth World Holocaust Forum. Following are some memories from this special event.

### USA

■ Dinner attendees included (left to right): Chairman of the **American Society for Yad Vashem Lenny Wilf**, Yad Vashem Director General **Dorit Novak**, and Yad Vashem Patrons **Dr. Miriam** and **Sheldon G. Adelson**.



■ American Society Young Leadership Associates (YLA) Chair **Rachel Shnay**, Yad Vashem Builder **Adina Burian**, and Yad Vashem Benefactor **Mark Moskowitz** attended the Forum and the Welcoming Dinner.



■ Yad Vashem Benefactors **Bracha** and **Marty Werber** with Managing Director of Yad Vashem's International Relations Division **Shaya Ben Yehuda** (right).



■ Yad Vashem Pillar **Steven Baral** (left) was joined by Director of the US Desk in Yad Vashem's International Relations Division **Jeremy Weiss** (second from left) and Lenny Wilf (right) at the World Holocaust Forum.



### ISRAEL

■ Holocaust survivor and Israeli War of Independence combat veteran **Sir Frank Lowy** was present at the World Holocaust Forum.



■ Yad Vashem supporters **Danna Azrieli** and her husband **Danny Hakim** attended the Welcoming Dinner prior to the World Holocaust Forum.



■ Chairperson of the **Friends of Yad Vashem in Israel Israelia Artzi** and her husband **Ran Artzi** were at the Welcoming Dinner.



■ Holocaust survivor and Yad Vashem supporter **Avraham Harshalom** (right) was present at the events, along with Director of the Friends of Yad Vashem in Israel **Yaniv Oren** (left).



■ Yad Vashem supporter **Michael Schwarzbaum** (center) was greeted at the event by Yaniv Oren (left) and Avraham Harshalom (right).



### VENEZUELA

■ **Fanny Cohen Cohn**, longtime friend of Yad Vashem, attended the Fifth World Holocaust Forum events.



## GERMANY

■ Also attending the Welcoming Dinner were (left to right): Chairman of the **Friends of Yad Vashem in Germany Kai Diekmann** and **Katja Kessler**; Director of the German-Speaking Countries and German Swiss Desk in Yad Vashem's International Relations Division **Ruth Ur**; **Frank Miram** of Deutsch Bahn; CEO of Ballspielverein Borussia 09 e.V. Dortmund **Hans Joachim Watzke**; Managing Director of Yad Vashem's International Relations Division **Shaya Ben Yehuda**; and **Sarah Reichert**, **Daniel Lörcher**, **Carsten Cramer** and **Andre Witte** from Borussia Dortmund.



## Christian Desk with ICEJ

■ **Dr. Jürgen Bühler** (second from right), President of the ICEJ, attended the World Holocaust Forum. At the Welcoming Dinner, his wife **Vesna Bühler** (right) sang. They were welcomed by Director of the **Christian Friends of Yad Vashem Sari Granitza** (left) and Yad Vashem Director General **Dorit Novak** (second from left).



## FRANCE

■ In her remarks on the topic of the Holocaust and antisemitism at the Welcoming Dinner, **Dr. Leah Pissar-Haas**, daughter of longtime Yad Vashem friends **Judith Pissar** and Holocaust survivor **Samuel Pissar z"l**, stated: "The only remedy, in the long run, is through transmission and education. I would like to applaud the extraordinary work that Yad Vashem does in this field, through their Museum Complex, breathtaking Archives and International School with its awesome program of training seminars. I don't know how you do it all, but somehow I feel safer knowing that you do." Dr. Pissar-Haas (second from right) was welcomed by (left to right): Yad Vashem Director General **Dorit Novak**, Director of the French-Speaking Countries and Benelux Desk in Yad Vashem's International Relations Division **Miry Gross** and International Relations Division Managing Director **Shaya Ben Yehuda**.



## SPAIN

■ Attending the Welcoming Dinner were (left to right): Director of the Latin America, Spain, Portugal and Miami Spanish-Speaking Desk **Perla Hazan**; President of the **Spanish Association for Yad Vashem Samuel Bengio**; Holocaust survivor and Israeli War of Independence combat veteran **Sir Frank Lowy**; and Yad Vashem Director General **Dorit Novak**.



## ARGENTINA

■ **Diego Marynberg** (left), son of Yad Vashem Benefactor **Dora Zitno**, attended the Fifth World Holocaust Forum together with his wife **Yehudit** (center). He was joined by Director of the Latin America, Spain, Portugal and Miami Spanish-Speaking Desk **Perla Hazan** (right).



■ **Adrian Werthein** (center), longtime friend of Yad Vashem, and **Fabiana Ricagno** (left) attended the Forum, accompanied by **Perla Hazan** (right).



## MEXICO

■ **Zvi Katz** (center), son of Yad Vashem Benefactors and longtime friends of Yad Vashem **Adina** and **Marcos Katz z"l** from Spain, attended the Fifth World Holocaust Forum, where they joined **Felipe VI**, King of Spain (right) and **Perla Hazan** (left).



# Friends Worldwide

## USA

■ On 17 November 2019, over 600 guests gathered at the Pierre Hotel in New York City for the **American Society for Yad Vashem's Annual Tribute Dinner**. This year, three generations of one family were honored: Holocaust survivors **Paula** and **Jack Gora** received the American Society's Remembrance Award, while their daughter **Mona Gora Sterling** and her husband **David Sterling** (Board Member) received its Leadership Award. **Samantha** and **Jonathan Friedman** and **Paz** and **Sam Friedman**, all



■ Standing, left to right: **David Sterling**, **Sam Friedman**, **Mona Gora Sterling**, **Paula Gora**, **Jack Gora**, **Jonathan Friedman**. Seated, left to right: **Tinette Sterling**, **Paz Friedman**, **Benni Friedman**, **Samantha Friedman**, **Abe Friedman**

active members of the American Society's Young Leadership Associates (YLA), received the Society's Young Leadership Award. The Gora-Sterling-Friedman family reflects the theme of this year's dinner: "Two are better than one... and a threefold cord cannot quickly be broken" (*Kohelet* - Ecclesiastes 4:9-12). All three generations of the family are deeply committed to Yad Vashem's mission of Holocaust remembrance and education.



■ American Society Chairman **Lenny Wilf** with the American Society Remembrance Award winners **Paula** and **Jack Gora**



■ Left to right: American Society Executive Committee Board Member and Dinner Chair **Mark Moskowitz**, Managing Director of Yad Vashem's International Relations Division **Shaya Ben Yehuda**, American Society Executive Director **Stanley H. Stone**, Yad Vashem Director General **Dorit Novak**, American Society Chairman **Lenny Wilf**, Director of the US Desk, International Relations Division **Jeremy Weiss**, American Society Treasurer **David Halpern**

■ On 22 July, **Barry** and **Martha Berkett** (third and fourth from left), **Lauren Berkett** and **Brian Fishbach** (left) and **Tom** and **Judy Flesh** (right) visited the Holocaust History Museum, where they were greeted by **Shaya Ben Yehuda** (fourth from right).



■ **Elon Gold** (fifth from right) and his family, together with the Rovner family, paid a visit to the Northern Garden, dedicated by the Book family, after touring the Holocaust History Museum on 15 October.



■ On 24 October, **Barry Levine** (right), along with his parents **Louise** and **Skip Levine**, visited the Yad Vashem Synagogue, which houses the Torah Scroll donated by Louise's parents, **Ed** and **Cecile (z"l) Mosberg**.



■ On 29 October, **Kenneth Willig** (center) and **Rosette Friedman Willig** (left) paid a significant visit to Yad Vashem, in which they toured the Holocaust History Museum and the "Flashes of Memory: Photography during the Holocaust" exhibition.



■ On 8 November, a delegation from the Houston Federation led by **Benjamin Warren** (front left, seated) were treated to a special viewing of Holocaust-era artifacts by **Noa Or** (right) of the Yad Vashem Artifacts Department, Museums Division.



■ On 14 November, noted chef and cookbook author **Susie Fishbein** (left) took a behind-the-scenes tour of the collection of culinary-related artifacts with **Michael Tal**, Director of the Artifacts Department, Museums Division (right).



■ **Henry Schanzer** (second from left), who survived the Shoah as a child, visited Yad Vashem on 4 December, along with his family. They toured the Holocaust History Museum and visited the tree planted in honor of **Adolphine Dorel** and **Jeanne Bonhomme**, Righteous Among the Nations who rescued Henry, accompanied by Director of the US Desk **Jeremy Weiss** (left).



■ Yad Vashem mourns the loss of Holocaust survivor and Yad Vashem Benefactor **Selma Gruder Horowitz, z"l**.



Selma was born in Hanaczow, Poland, the second of four children, to Leah and Bernard Gruder, who owned a wholesale butcher business.

During WWII, Selma was taken to the Kurowice concentration camp. When the Germans liquidated the camp in June 1943, she escaped and hid in the forests of Hanaczow with her family. They remained hidden until April 1944, when their village was burned by the Ukrainians. She later fled with her mother and three siblings to Bilka, Poland, where they were hidden by Maira Paczkowska in her home until their liberation three months later. Mrs. Paczkowska was posthumously recognized as Righteous Among the Nations in August 2003.

Selma founded and served as the President of East Coast Industrial Uniform, Inc., a uniform rental company. She also served as an Executive Board member of the American Society for Yad Vashem and as a Trustee of Yad Vashem, Jerusalem.

Selma was a generous philanthropist who dedicated much of her life to supporting Jewish causes worldwide and to Holocaust remembrance.

Yad Vashem extends its deepest condolences to her siblings Pearl Field and Herbert Gruder. May her memory be for a blessing.

■ On 10 November, a delegation from a "Momentum Grand" women's trip participated in special behind-the-scenes look at the Yad Vashem Archives.



■ On 24 November, **Nina** and **Sandy Blockman** spent a meaningful day at Yad Vashem touring the Holocaust History Museum.



■ On 27 December **Casey Bag** (center) participated in a Twinning Ceremony in honor of his bar mitzvah at the Yad Vashem Memorial Cave along with his father, **Laurence** (right) and **Shaya Ben Yehuda** (left).



■ On 3 December, **Gary** and **Donna Naftalis** paid a visit to the Northern Garden dedicated by the Book family, accompanied by **Shaya Ben Yehuda** (left).



■ Yad Vashem mourns the loss of **Jean Schreiberman** (née Pechter), z"l, cherished sister of Yad Vashem Pillar Jack Pechter and beloved wife of the late Isaac Goldman.



Jean was born in Rejowicz, Poland. As the oldest sibling along with Helen, z"l, Jack and Dora, she took care of all their needs while her parents, Max and Sarah Pechter, z"l, provided for the family. During the war, Jean's parents cared for Isaac Goldman, z"l, the only survivor in his family, who would later become Jean's husband. The family fled from town to town and finally settled in a displaced persons' (DP) camp in Germany. Isaac and Jean fell in love and married in a DP camp in Kazakhstan.

Jean was pregnant with her daughter when the couple landed in the US on 25 December 1947. In Baltimore, they established Goldman's Fancy Bakery in 1950. Isaac worked in the back, baking and decorating cakes, while Jean greeted customers with her bright smile and white apron.

Because of the struggles they suffered during the Shoah, Jean and Isaac were dedicated to helping the frail and elderly by providing excellent care in a convalescent center for all in need.

Jean is survived by two children, two siblings, five grandchildren, 20 great-grandchildren, and one great-great-grandchild. May her memory be for a blessing.

■ To mark their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary, the extended family of Yad Vashem Builders **Alan** and **Jane Cornell** participated in a special tour at Yad Vashem on 23 December, which included a visit to the tree planted in honor of Righteous Among the Nations **Jan Spreij** and his parents, **Adrianus** and **Antje**, who saved the Cornell (Cohn) family during the Holocaust.



# Friends Worldwide

■ On 14 November, the American Society for Yad Vashem co-sponsored a special Righteous Among the Nations ceremony with Ambassador Dani Dayan, Consul General of Israel in New York. **Miro Krešić** (pictured) accepted the award on behalf of his late mother, **Zdenka Krešić**. Zdenka, from Croatia, put her own life at risk to save the life of **Mark Krešić** during the Holocaust. Gathered in the home of Dani Dayan, the audience heard from Miro as well as Mark Krešić, who is alive today thanks to the humanity of Zdenka.



■ Yad Vashem mourns the passing of Holocaust survivor and Yad Vashem Benefactor **Stella Skura, z"l**.



Stella was born on 10 August 1923 in Zywiec, Poland, the only child of Ida and Isidore Obstler.

Along with her parents, she survived the atrocities of the Holocaust. She met her husband Samuel after the war in a displaced persons camp. Stella and Samuel, z"l, moved to New York, where they established a new life. They were lovingly married for 61 years.

Stella and Samuel Skura were generous philanthropists. Their main mission in life was to support Holocaust remembrance. They were among the original founders of the American Society for Yad Vashem; they donated the candelabra monument that became the symbol of Yad Vashem in Jerusalem and established the Learning Center on the Mount of Remembrance as well.

Stella is survived by her daughter, American Society Board Member Cheryl Lifshitz, her grandchildren, Iris and Adam Lindenbaum, and Ilana Lifshitz, and her great-grandchildren, Miriam and Sam Lindenbaum. May her memory be for a blessing.

■ Yad Vashem mourns the loss of Holocaust survivor and Yad Vashem Benefactor **Maks Etingin, z"l**.



During WWII, Maks, his brother and their parents were forced into the ghetto in their hometown of Vilna, where they lived in crowded and oppressive conditions. They escaped the ghetto shortly before it was liquidated, aided by Boleslaw Boratynski, who was recognized as Righteous Among the Nations in 1992. Mr. Boratynski hid the Etingin family in a small pit in his backyard for ten months until liberation.

After moving to Sweden with his family, Maks immigrated to the United States in 1947 on a student visa. In 1953, he met Rochelle, a fifth-generation Israeli who had come to New York to study fashion.

The Etingin family feels a very special connection with Yad Vashem as it commemorates the terrible hardships that eventually brought Maks to the US. The Etingins established a special memorial panorama at Yad Vashem to honor Mr. Boratynski for saving the lives of their family during the Holocaust. In 1992, three generations of the Etingin family met Boleslaw Boratynski's widow and granddaughter at Yad Vashem for an emotional reunion.

Maks's legacy of Holocaust remembrance, of building a vibrant Jewish life, and of strengthening Israel and the Jewish people, continues to leave a lasting impression on those whose lives he touched.

Yad Vashem expresses its deepest condolences to Maks's widow Rochelle, their daughters Orli (Jonathan) and Doreen (Neil), and the entire family. May his memory be for a blessing.

■ On 8 December, **Michael Azeez** (third from right) was joined by a group of friends for a guided tour of the Holocaust History Museum at Yad Vashem.



■ Yad Vashem mourns the untimely passing of **Dr. Ron B. Meier**, former Executive Director of the American Society for Yad Vashem.



Ron was the son of Holocaust survivors, both of whom were in their early teens growing up in the same small town in Germany around the time of the *Kristallnacht* pogrom. Ron was dedicated to Yad Vashem's mission of Holocaust remembrance, commemoration and education. His professionalism, diligence and outstanding interpersonal skills were the basis of his great contribution to the American Society and their work with Yad Vashem in Jerusalem.

Ron's distinguished record of leadership in the Jewish community and communal service included his positions as the New York Regional Director of the Anti-Defamation League and the Senior Vice President and Founding Director of the Mandel Center for Leadership Excellence at the Jewish Federations of North America. He also served as President of the New Jersey Association of Jewish Communal Service and later as president of the Jewish Communal Service Association of North America.

Yad Vashem extends condolences to Ron's wife Joyce Raynor, their daughters, Rachel Meier and Jessica Werner (Jason), grandchildren and the entire family. May his memory be for a blessing.

■ American Society Board Member **Lawrence Burian** gave a lecture as part of Brooklyn College's #WeStandAgainstHate initiative on 25 November. Lawrence spoke about his father's remarkable autobiography, *A Boy from Buštinay*. Born in Czechoslovakia in 1930, **Andrew Burian** (left, shaking hands with a student who attended the event) was forcefully taken from his home and imprisoned in the Mateszalka ghetto in Hungary. He survived Auschwitz-Birkenau, Mauthausen and the infamous death marches before ultimately being liberated from Gunskirchen in Austria.



## AUSTRIA

■ On 30 December 2019, Yad Vashem hosted a ceremony in memory of Holocaust survivor **Yehuda Schwarzbaum z"l**, in recognition of the generous gift made to Yad Vashem by his wife **Sara** and his sons **Ron** and **Michael**.

In honor of Yehuda's love of literature, the Online Library on the Yad Vashem website was dedicated in his memory. The ceremony included a screening of Yehuda's moving life story, made by his son Michael, and remarks by Yad Vashem Chairman **Avner Shalev**.

"Despite the terrible losses he endured, Yehuda's *joie de vivre* and love for his fellow human being was a source of inspiration for all those around him," said Shalev. "We are deeply grateful to the Schwarzbaum family for joining Yad Vashem's Circle of Trustees, assisting us in our mission to perpetuate Holocaust remembrance for future generations."



## ISRAEL

■ Yad Vashem mourns the passing of Holocaust survivor **Nata Osmo Ganegno**, a true friend of Yad Vashem, in December 2019 at the age of 96.



Nata was born in 1923 on the island of Corfu, Greece. After the Germans occupied Corfu in September 1943, Nata enlisted in an underground organization, surreptitiously monitoring radio broadcasts in a cellar under a German officers' club. When the order to deport the Jews of Corfu was received on 13 April 1944, Nata helped smuggle out two of her sisters, who survived. Refusing offers of rescue, she was deported, along with the remaining Jews of the island, via Athens to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Her parents and other members of her family were murdered there.

After the war, Nata immigrated to Israel, where she lived with her husband Israel in Tel Aviv. Throughout her life, Nata worked to commemorate the Jews of Corfu and the community that once flourished there. May her memory be for a blessing.

## CANADA

■ Yad Vashem welcomes **Jonathan Allen** as the new Executive Director of the **Canadian Society for Yad Vashem**. Jonathan was employed in progressively responsible positions in the Jewish community for almost 20 years. Born in New Waterford, Nova Scotia on Cape Breton Island, Jonathan has a Commerce Degree in Marketing from Mount Allison University and a Law Degree from the University of New Brunswick. He was called to the Bar in Ontario in 1994.



Jonathan moved to Toronto in the spring of 1997 to help guide a tech company focusing on the private education sector. He began his Jewish communal professional career in 2002 when he joined the annual campaign team as Assistant Campaign Director at UJA Federation of Greater Toronto. In 2008, Jonathan became the National Executive Director of The Canadian Shaare Zedek Hospital Foundation and in 2011 joined the Canadian Associates of Ben Gurion University of the Negev as its Toronto Region Executive Director.

Jonathan, his wife Ellen and their three children reside in North York. On joining the Canadian Society's team, he said: "I am very excited to be working with the Canadian Society for Yad Vashem's leadership and professionals in supporting Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Center, in continuing the vital work of Holocaust research, education, and commemoration."

■ On 28 November, Yad Vashem Visionary **Miles Nadal** visited the IDF Ariel Sharon Training Campus, Ir Haba'adim and Yad Vashem's new Education Center for Holocaust Remembrance. On 1 December, he visited Yad Vashem for a special tour of the "Flashes of Memory: Photography During the Holocaust" exhibition, the Museum of Holocaust Art and the Artifacts Room.



■ On 22 November, **Eddie** and **Sylvia Fisch** (right) toured the Holocaust History Museum and the "Flashes of Memory: Photography during the Holocaust" exhibition.



## AUSTRALIA

■ On 10 October, **Jacov** (left) and **Rita Weinberg** (right) visited the Children's Memorial and Holocaust History Museum with their son **Daniel** (second from left), daughter-in-law **Virginia** (second from right) and granddaughter **Bo** (center). Later, Bo participated in a bat mitzvah twinning ceremony in the Yad Vashem Synagogue, in which she pledged to remember **Mina Blumenfrucht, z"l**, who did not survive the Holocaust.



■ The Australian Wall was established in 2013 at the initiative of Founding President of **Australian Friends of Yad Vashem Johnny Baker, z"l**, to enable the Australian Jewish community to memorialize victims and survivors of the Holocaust. Housed in the new section of Yad Vashem's Memorial Cave, the 135-plaque Australian Wall was completed on 26 November 2019, and a second Australian Wall currently has five plaques with space for many more.



# Friends Worldwide

## FRANCE

■ On 10 December, the **French Friends of Yad Vashem** marked its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary at its annual Gala Dinner in Paris. Guests included former French Friends presidents, Chief Rabbi of France **Rabbi Haim Korsia**, Israeli Ambassador to France **H.E. Ms. Aliza Bin Noun**, Yad Vashem Benefactors and friends.

Ambassador Bin Noun spoke about the rise of antisemitism in the world and acknowledged the French Parliament for adopting the definition of antisemitism as laid out by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA). French Friends President **Pierre-Francois Veil** (pictured) gave an overview of the activities carried out by the society over the last 30



years, highlighting the importance of Yad Vashem's training seminars for French teachers in the framework of "The Network of French Cities and Villages: Honoring the Righteous Among the Nations." He recognized the team of volunteers and staff of the French Friends for their dedication and devotion.

With the help of a short film telling the heartbreaking story of the Frenkel family during the Holocaust, **Miry Gross**, Director of the French-speaking Countries and Benelux Desk at Yad Vashem's International Relations Division, spoke about future challenges of transmitting the legacy of victims and survivors of the Holocaust in an era without survivors, by telling the stories using documents, artifacts, works of art and oral or written testimonies.

**Anne Sinclair**, the well-known French television and radio interviewer, told the story of her family during the Holocaust, emphasizing the moral duty of keeping the memory alive for generations to come.

## UNITED KINGDOM

■ On 22 October, **Anthony and Ann Marie Gee** visited the Children's Memorial and Holocaust History Museum with their children **Archie and Luella**. Archie participated in a meaningful bar mitzvah twinning ceremony in the Yad Vashem Synagogue, in which he pledged to remember **Aharon Yaacov Zizelsky, z"l**, who did not survive the Holocaust.



■ On 15 October, **Susan and David Gradel** (right) were accompanied by their friends **Gep and Joyce Salentijn** (left) for a tour of the Children's Memorial and Holocaust History Museum.



## MIAMI SPANISH-SPEAKERS

■ **Eva Friedman** (center) was joined by her children **Miriam Kibliskey, Josi and Yaeli Friedman** and grandchildren **Tali, Nicole, David and Daniel** to unveil the plaque dedicated in honor of Eva's parents, Holocaust survivors **Rosita and Adolfo Friedman, z"l**, in Yad Vashem's Archives and Library Building. They also visited plaques in memory of her family in Yad Vashem's Memorial Cave.



■ **Ilana and Sidney Wainberg** (right) and **Toni and Berni Vainrub** (left) visited Yad Vashem.



## MEXICO

■ **Lina and Moises Mondlak** (left) unveiled a plaque at Yad Vashem to mark the bat mitzvah of their granddaughter **Liora Mekler Mondlak** (right).



## VENEZUELA

■ **Andrés and Claudia Capriles** visited Yad Vashem in January along with their family.



■ **Paulina Gamus-Cohen** (third from right) was joined by her family to unveil a plaque dedicated to her late husband **Amram Cohen, z"l**, in Yad Vashem's Square of Hope.





## COSTA RICA

■ **Jeannette** and **Isaac Wasserstein** visited the Garden of the Righteous, where they saw the names of Righteous Among the Nations **Aleksander** and **Antonia Wyrzykowski** (Poland) who saved Isaac's father **Szmul (Shmuel)** during WWII.



## CHRISTIAN DESK WITH ICEJ

■ During the ICEJ Feast of Tabernacles in October 2019, leaders of ICEJ worldwide came for a special behind-the-scenes tour to Yad Vashem. Left to right: **Dominique Walter** (Switzerland), **Mojmir Kallus** (Israel), **Daniel Wermuth** (Switzerland), **Donna Holbrook** (Canada), **Jacob and Christina Elisabeth Leinum** (Denmark), **Daryl Hedding** (USA), **Finn** and **Frida Jeggard** (Denmark).



■ During the ICEJ Feast of Tabernacles, Director of the **Christian Friends of Yad Vashem Sara (Sari) Granitza** (second from left), and **Shavit Aharoni-Simons** (left) and **Joel Mack** (right) from the Christian Friends Desk, met with Christian Leadership Seminar graduate, Yad Vashem Friend and producer at *TV Visjon Norge* **Håkon Sengsvoll** (second from right) at the Yad Vashem booth in Jerusalem's Pais Arena.



## Your Support Helps Make a Difference

All of the activities, projects and events which you have just read about are made possible thanks to the generous support of our donors. In these difficult times, when there is a worrying rise in antisemitism and Holocaust denial around the world, Yad Vashem is doubling its efforts to commemorate the Holocaust, disseminate its universal implications and strengthen Jewish continuity. Yad Vashem is deeply grateful for your generosity in supporting its vital work and welcomes both new friends and established supporters as partners in our shared mission.

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“

*What is done cannot be undone,  
but one can prevent it from  
happening again."*

Anne Frank (1929, Frankfurt, Germany -1945, Bergen Belsen, Germany)

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